ASSOCIATION.

Men faithfully warned, in the Holy Scriptures, to prepare for all the changes which they are called to experience in Divine Providence.

A

SERMON,

Delivered at *STOCKBRIDGE*, (Massachusetts) September 17 h, 1804;

BEING THE DAY
OF THE INTERMENT OF

Mrs. Elizabeth West,

Consort of the Rev. STEPHEN WEST, D.D. who died Sept. 15, 1804, in the 74th year of her age—

AND OF HER NEPHEW

Henry W. Dwight, Esq.

Who died in the Evening of the same day, in the 48th year of his age.

BY ALVAN HYDE, A. M.
Pastor of the Church in Lee, *Massachusetts.*

Published by Request of the Mourners.

PRINTED BY
H. WILLARD,
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ERRATA.

Page 5—11th line from bottom, for *fruitlineſs*, read fruitleſsneſs.
——9—6th from bot. for *workings*, read warnings.
——15—14th from top, for *warning*, read warnings.
The ſame, 16 from top, for *more*, read none.
——21—1ſt line, for *this a*, read This is a.
——23—11th from bot. for *afflicting*, read afflictive.

S.O.7
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Harriet Hyde

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FUNERAL SERMON.

LUKE 16. 31.

AND HE SAID UNTO HIM, IF THEY HEAR NOT MOSES AND THE PROPHETS, NEITHER WILL THEY BE PERSUADED THOUGH ONE ROSE FROM THE DEAD.

TO perſuade men to prepare for the great and intereſting ſcene of exchanging worlds, though it is a work altogether reaſonable, and eſſentially connected with the happineſs of their immortal ſouls, has ever been found a difficult taſk. The moſt judicious and eminently pious parents have been heard to acknowledge their total inability, merely by the force of counſel and arguments, to diſpoſe their children ſo to "number their days, as to apply their hearts unto wiſdom." All the ſkill of the moſt able and faithful miniſters has repeatedly been baffled, in their attempts to make their fellow-ſinners think ſeriouſly of death, and live with reference to the eternal world. And the prophets, though enabled by the inſpiration of the Holy Spirit to diſcloſe future events, yet, after plainly delivering God's meſſage to his people, were wont to make this affecting exclamation, *Lord, who hath believed our report?*

To expoſe this amazing ſtupidity and unteachableneſs in regard to the concerns of a future world, ſo generally obſervable among men, was one object of the divine Saviour in delivering the parable, of which the words of the text are a part. The whole parable is as follows:—"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of ſores, and deſiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his ſores. And it came to paſs, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's boſom: the rich man alſo died, and was buried;—And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and ſeeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his boſom. And he cried, and ſaid, Father Abraham, have mercy on me; and ſend Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham ſaid, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receiveſt thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And, beſides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: ſo that they which would paſs from hence to you cannot; neither can they paſs to us that would come from thence. Then he ſaid, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldeſt ſend him

" to my father's houſe :—for I have five breth-
" ren ; that he may teſtify unto them, leſt they
" alſo come into this place of torment. Abraham
" ſaith unto him, they have Moſes and the
" prophets ; let them hear them. And he ſaid,
" Nay, father Abraham : but if one went unto
" them from the dead, they will repent. And
" he ſaid unto him, if they hear not Moſes and
" the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded
" though one roſe from the dead."

When this unhappy man, in the torments of hell, was aſſured of the ſufficiency of divine Revelation, he appeared to feel, that his brethren would ſlight all the warnings contained in this, as he fooliſhly did ; and, therefore, interceded for ſomething greater. He is repreſented as deſiring a meſſenger might be ſent to them from the dead ; as if, from ſuch an one, warnings might be communicated, which they would not be able to withſtand. To all his importunity Abraham put an end, by aſſuring him of the fruitlineſs of any ſuch extraordinary means for their conviction. He gave him to underſtand that the evidences of a divine revelation were ſo clear, and the warnings therein contained ſo full and abundant, that if they would not hearken to Moſes and the prophets, neither would they be perſuaded to a thorough repentance, though one ſhould ariſe from the dead to viſit them ;—that the ſame prejudices and luſts, which influenced them to deſpiſe the methods of inſtruction with which they

were already favored, would alſo lead them to ſlight and forget all that could be ſaid to them, by ſuch a meſſenger as he deſired.

In this parable, particularly in that part of it now ſelected for a text, we are taught to put a very high value on the Holy Scriptures. Their importance, as being the word of God, and their ſufficiency with reſpect to thoſe inſtructions and warnings which men need as candidates for eternity, are here urged, by the divine Saviour, with great clearneſs and force. Looking to theſe words, ſaints may conclude, that the only ſources of conſolation under afflictive providences, are to be ſought for in the *Holy Scriptures*; and in view of them ſinners may infer, that they cannot poſſibly give greater proof of obſtinacy of heart, than by diſregarding the warnings *they* contain.

In diſcourſing further from theſe words, on the preſent ſolemn occaſion, it is propoſed to ſhow,

I. That men may never expect to have warnings to prepare for death, which are more full, more ſolemn, or clothed with higher authority, than thoſe that are contained in the Holy Scriptures.

II. If they can withſtand ſuch warnings, they may know they have obſtinacy enough to die in their ſins, and to be driven away in their iniquity.

III. Conclude with an improvement.

In the firſt place, it is to be ſhown, that men may never expect to have warnings to prepare for death, which are more full, more ſolemn, or clothed with higher authority, than thoſe that are contained in the Holy Scriptures.

Here it may be obſerved,

1. That in the Holy Scriptures, the Lord Jehovah himſelf ſpeaks to men.

Admitting, that the books of the Old and New Teſtaments are a revelation from God, which is abundantly evident from the miracles, that were wrought in confirmation of their truth—from the numerous prophecies in them, which have been, and ſtill are fulfilling—from the excellency and perfection of the ſyſtem of religion, which they contain—from the entire harmony of the writers, though they lived in different parts and ages of the world, and from many other inconteſtible proofs;—admitting, that theſe books are what they claim to be, and what all good men believe them to be, a revelation from God, it will follow, that they cannot poſſibly be clothed with higher authority. The words they contain are the words of the Lord Jehovah. It is not ſufficiently realized by men, that when they read the Holy Scriptures, they read a revelation from God to them. The Lord addreſſes them, in his word, as really as he did Moſes, when he ſpake to him with an audible voice from the burning buſh; or when he called to him out of the midſt of the

cloud, which covered mount Sinai. What if the heavens were daily rent, by the voice of the Almighty, ſpeaking to the children of men? The words communicated, in this way, would not be clothed with higher authority, than thoſe which we now have opportunity to read in the Holy Scriptures. On the pages of the inſpired volume, the words recorded are all truth, becauſe they came from the God of truth. There, the Lord Jehovah addreſſes us, as rational and accountable creatures and as ſinners, bound into the eternal world. His language to us is the language of a God of juſtice, and yet of a God, boundleſs in mercy. He has plainly revealed to us our fallen, ruined ſtate, and the great compaſſion he has had on us, in the proviſion and gift of his Son, whoſe blood has been ſhed on the croſs, to make an atonement for ſin. He has ſet life and death before us, and, with great engagedneſs, called upon us to ſhun the "broad way, which leadeth to deſtruction," and to direct our feet into the "narrow way which leadeth unto life." He has aſſured us, that if we continue in a ſtate of alienation from him, and roll ſin as a ſweet morſel under our tongues, we muſt expect to lie down in everlaſting ſorrow;—that if we lay up our treaſure on the earth, we muſt expect that death will blaſt all our hopes, and terminate all our proſpects of enjoyment. He has alſo faithfully warned us, as we regard our precious and immortal ſouls, and as we reſpect his authority, to avoid all delays in theſe important concerns;—that we

attend immediately to the things, which belong to our peace, before they ſhall be everlaſtingly hidden from our eyes. He is plain and poſitive in the injunction, that we "boaſt not ourſelves of to-morrow," becauſe we "know not what a day may bring forth;"—that we "be ready; for in ſuch an hour as we think not the Son of man cometh."

THESE are the ſubjects on which God addreſſes us, in his holy word. Can we, as rational creatures, affirm that we are not intereſted in them? Can we ſoberly ſay, that the Lord Jehovah is not ſincere in his declarations? Has he left any ground for us to complain, that he has not been ſufficiently explicit?—that duty is not made plain?—and that his warnings and threatenings are not clear? No; my brethren ſuch has been the divine faithfulneſs, that the door is ſhut againſt all inſinuations of this kind. We may never expect to have warnings to prepare for death, and the great day of judgment, which are more full, more ſolemn, or clothed with higher authority, than thoſe that are contained in the Holy Scriptures. The warnings, which we, there, read, are the workings of God, and the threatenings are his threatenings. They are addreſſed to *us*, and they come with the ſame infinite weight and authority, as if we heard them announced, by an audible voice from heaven. It is nothing but unbelief, and amazing unbelief, that keeps men

from trembling, when they read, in the ſacred oracles, the ſolemn addreſſes from the Lord Jehovah.

Our divine teacher intimates, in the text, that the writings of Moſes and the prophets, by which he could mean the books of the Old Teſtament only, contained ſuch inſtructions and warnings, and were ſo full of light, that if men would not regard them, they would not be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead. For us, in this age of the world, much more has been done; for we are favored with the important addition of the New-Teſtament, and we ſee the canon of ſcripture completed. God has communicated to us all he ever deſigns to communicate to men, on the great and intereſting ſubjects, which relate to the kingdom of his Son, and the concerns of our immortal ſouls. Though the faith of chriſtians looks forward to a time, when "the earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſea," yet they are not expecting this to take place in conſequence of any additional revelation. In that glorious period of the church, there will be no need of any other bible, than that to which we now have acceſs. God has cloſed his declarations, his warnings, his threatenings, his predictions and his promiſes. And what more could he ſay to alarm us, as ſinners, or to ſupport and animate us, as chriſtians? Can we conceive of motives to diſſuade us from ſin,

and to attach us to the duties of religion, which are greater and more powerful, than thoſe we find in the Holy Scriptures? It is preſumed we cannot. Well, therefore, may our mouths be ſtopped, and we ſtand aſtoniſhed at our own unbelief.

2. The warnings of God in his *providence* are, in no inſtances, to be conſidered greater or more ſolemn, than thoſe contained in the Holy Scriptures.

What is now aſſerted may, poſſibly, not correſpond with the views of thoſe, who have not attended particularly to the ſubject. It is acknowledged, that God, in the diſpenſations of his providence, cauſes ſome moſt awful and alarming events to take place;—events which are powerfully calculated to arouſe men from their ſtupidity, and to make them feel the importance of being immediately prepared to meet their Judge. Such events are not unfrequent. What ravages among our fellow-creatures, our acquaintances and relations are made by the king of terrors! How ſuddenly are we ſometimes bereft of our deareſt earthly friends; and what ſorrow and anguiſh of ſoul do ſuch bereavements occaſion! It is readily admitted, that ſuch ſudden and awful providences give us a greater ſhock, for a little time, than the warnings of God's word. The former make us tremble and quake, while we can hear the latter, without any ſpecial emotions. But, from

this, are we warranted to draw the concluſion, that when ſuch events take place, the warning to us is really greater, than any we find in the Holy Scriptures? Shall we ſay, that they communicate more real inſtruction? This does not appear to be the caſe. There are as many awful and alarming things threatened, in divine revelation, to nations and to individual perſons, as are ever known to take place in the diſpenſations of providence. On the pages of inſpiration, alſo are recorded, for our inſtruction, providences which are as ſolemn and awful, as any with which we are ever perſonally converſant.

What we call providence is nothing more than a fulfilment of that which is plainly revealed in the holy ſcriptures. God has not, in one inſtance, dealt with ſaints or ſinners differently from what he gave them reaſon to expect in his word. No trials are brought on families, nor on individual perſons, however grievous they may ſeem, which exceed the threatenings, that are to be found in divine revelation. It is owing to unbelief, and to nothing elſe, that men are not as much alarmed, and do not appear as ſober and ſolemn, when they read the warnings of the ſacred oracles, as when they hear of the death of a particular friend; or when they are called, as is ſometimes the caſe, to attend the funeral ſolemnities of thoſe, whoſe lives were inſtantly taken, without having opportunity to put up to an of-

fended God even one petition. Inſtances of mortality of this kind are nothing more than what the Moſt High threatens in his word. If ſuch paſſages of divine truth as the following—*Thou knoweſt not what a day may bring forth—Be ready; for in ſuch an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh—The day of the Lord ſo cometh as a thief in the night*, were made to take hold of the hearts of men, they would ſee them to contain warnings, which are as full and ſolemn, as thoſe communicated to them, by the changes that take place in this dying world. It appears, therefore, that we ought to view the afflictive ſcenes, opened to us in divine providence, not as exceeding the warnings of God's word; but, as being an accompliſhment of them. When "man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the ſtreets," we barely ſee the Holy Scriptures fulfilled. In the diſpenſations of providence, God never goes beyond his word. His word may be ſaid to lead the way, as to inſtructions and warnings; and this is one ſenſe in which he hath magnified his word above all his name.

3. Men may never expect to have warnings, which are more full, or more ſolemn, from the deſk, nor from any chriſtian friends, than thoſe that are contained in the Holy Scriptures.

The miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt, who are conſecrated to guide the ſouls of men, and who are directed to "reprove, rebuke and exhort with all

long ſuffering and doctrine," have to repair to the Holy Scriptures for all the inſtructions, which they are enabled to communicate. They may be engaging and powerful in their addreſſes, and clear and forcible in their reaſonings on religious ſubjects—they may diſcourſe with ſuch feeling and energy on the importance of being prepared for the great ſcenes of the future world, and they may accompany their inſtructions with ſuch ſolemn warnings, as to make the hearts of the ungodly tremble; but after all, it is impoſſible that they ſhould exceed the inſtructions and warnings, contained in the word of God. This is a point which may be made evident in a few words. They, who ſtand in the place of ſpiritual watchmen, are dependent on the Holy Scriptures for all the knowledge, which they have of God's warnings and threatenings. To no other ſource can they go for the inſtructions, which they attempt to give. As faithful men, and as men who feel themſelves bound to declare God's counſel to their fellow-ſinners, they can never go beyond his word. They are commanded to give themſelves to ſtudy, that their profiting may appear, and that the people of God may be edified; but, after the moſt painful reſearches, they are not able to publiſh a ſingle truth or duty, which is not derived from divine revelation. They can ſay nothing further of the conſequences of living and dying in ſin, than what is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. They can ſuggeſt no

motives more powerful to perſuade ſinners to immediate repentance, than thoſe, which are contained on the pages of inſpiration.

THE moſt able, learned and pious miniſters are ready to acknowledge, that they obtain from that revelation, which God has made to men, all the inſtructions, which they are enabled to give either ſaints or ſinners. They can warn no farther, than that has warned. It is true, that the minds of ſinners may be more ſolemnly impreſſed, under the powerful preaching of the word, than when they read the Holy Scriptures; but, we are not to infer from this, that the preacher gives greater and more ſolemn warning than what are to be found in the ſacred volume. If he is faithful, he gives the ſame warnings; but he gives more in addition. He never goes beyond what is plainly revealed. From the Holy Scriptures he derives all his inſtructions. The eloquence of a WHITFIELD excited the attention and admiration of thouſands; yet he never communicated any inſtruction, which, in point of importance, or of its ſolemnity, exceeded, or even equalled, the language and addreſs of the inſpired writers. He gave many warnings, and he did it in a very ſolemn and moving manner; but, he was dependent on the Holy Scriptures for all his knowledge of thoſe truths, which relate to the ſouls of men, and for the arguments with which they were to be enforced.

PARENTS can warn their children no further than they have instructions from divine revelation; and whoever pretends to go beyond divine revelation, in giving instructions and warnings, pretends to be wise above what is written. To be chargeable with this is to incur great guilt in the sight of Him, who, in the scriptures of truth, hath spoken to men. It is directly impeaching the wisdom and goodness of God; and to manifest his abhorrence of such arrogancy, as well as to warn men against being guilty of it, he expressly says, *If any man shall add unto these things*, GOD *shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.*

4. IF our departed friends were to return, and attempt to warn us against persisting in a life of sin, they could say nothing, which would be more weighty or solemn, than what we find in the Holy Scriptures.

IN the parable, of which the words of the text are the conclusion, the rich man in hell is represented as speaking a different language. He bro't out the feelings of the unbelieving and hardened Jews of the Saviour's day, and of the impenitent of every age. Undervaluing the evidences of the revelation which God had given, he resorted to signs and wonders, as more important means of conviction. A messenger from the dead, as he vainly thought, would have a greater effect than any thing which could be found in the Holy Scriptures.

It is acknowledged, that if such an event, as that for which he interceded, should take place, it would make us tremble, more than the reading of the scriptures, the preaching of the word, or the ordinary occurrences of divine providence. Notwithstanding this, there would not be more real warning in it. We should be especially struck with the novelty and strangeness of the event. But, if such things were to be frequent, they would loose, in a degree, their terror as is the case with death, and with the faithful preaching of divine truth. This would be owing to that hardness of heart, which is a characteristic of depraved men. We all have such unteachable hearts, by nature, that the frequent repetition of solemn providences, which are calculated to soften, do in reality harden, them.

Besides; how irrational is the supposition, that our deceased friends, whatever may be their state in the world of spirits, if they should be suffered to return, could give us warnings which would be more solemn and weighty, or better fitted to excite our attention and to fill our minds with a proper concern, than those we already have, in the Holy Scriptures? This also would be impeaching the wisdom and goodness of Him, who hath undertaken to instruct men, in regard to the infinite concerns of eternity. In that revelation, which is put into our hands, we have the warnings of the Lord Jehovah, and we cannot have greater.

I PROCEED to ſhow,

II THAT if men can withſtand ſuch warnings, they may know they have obſtinacy enough to die in their ſins, and to be driven away in their iniquity.

IT has been ſhown, under the preceding head, that men may never expect to have warnings, which exceed thoſe, that they may read in God's word, either in regard to their importance, ſolemnity, or authority. If they can reſiſt *theſe*, they can reſiſt unto death. If they can reſiſt *theſe*, they may know they have hardneſs and unbelief enough in their hearts to withſtand the moſt ſolemn providences, which ever take place in this world; and, that if one of their acquaintance and moſt intimate friends ſhould ariſe from the dead, and with an horrid appearance, and in awful manner, aſſure them, from his own experience, that there was, indeed, a place of torment for the wicked, it would be totally inſufficient to make them loathe ſin. If they can reſiſt the inſtructions and warnings of God's holy word, they may know, that if they were brought to a ſick and dying bed, and had an expectation of plunging, in a few moments, into the eternal world of miſery, it would not all be ſufficient to change ſuch hearts as they poſſeſs. Such a proſpect might make them tremble and quake; but, it would be inſufficient, of itſelf, to produce *love*. Often has this been acknowledged by the wicked, in their dying moments. They have found, by their own

ſorrowful experience, that the greateſt proſpect of death would not bring them to an acquaintance with religious exerciſes—would not give them a ſight of the beauty and excellency of the divine character. And men need no other proof, that their hearts are thus hard and obſtinate, than their reſiſting the warnings of God in the Holy Scriptures.

We may learn ſomething of the exceeding wickedneſs and obſtinacy of the human heart, by looking to the conduct of thoſe Jews, who were ſpectators of the raiſing of Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, from the dead. They ſaw this great event—they ſaw Lazarus come out of the grave, after having been, four days, buried, and muſt have known that it was the finger of God; and yet they had wickedneſs and malice enough in their hearts to reſiſt all this evidence, and even to ſeek his life. The ſoldiers, alſo, who were eye-witneſſes of the reſurrection of Chriſt, made it evident, that they had the ſame wickedneſs and malice in their hearts. They ſaw this great event—they heard the earthquake, and, for a time, became themſelves as dead men; and yet ſuffered themſelves to be hired to bear falſe teſtimony againſt the whole.

Each of theſe miracles was better calculated to convince men of the almighty power of God, and of the importance of attending to his word, than the meſſenger would be, whom the rich man in

hell is repreſented as requeſting for a warning to his brethren. With great propriety, therefore, might it be ſaid to him in reply—*If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.* It may be naturally inferred from this reply, that no perſon can give greater proof of obſtinacy of heart, than by diſregarding the warnings, contained in divine revelation. To be deaf to theſe is certain evidence of ſpiritual death. In the Holy Scriptures God hath ſpoken to men, and though he ſpeaks to them in other ways, yet in none with more ſolemnity, nor with more engagedneſs. If, therefore, men can withſtand ſuch plain and ſolemn warnings, as are in God's word, they need not wait to have greater, before they determine, that they have obſtinacy enough in their hearts to die in their ſins, and to be driven away in their iniquity.

The ſubject will now be concluded with an Improvement.

1. The manner in which we are diſpoſed to treat the Holy Scriptures determines what effect afflictions have on our minds.

We may be much affected under the ſpecial providences of God—we may be borne down under his mighty hand; but, if we at the ſame time, can diſregard the warnings of the *bible*, we are without evidence, that ſuch providences have any ſaving

effect. This a thought with which our minds ought to be deeply impreſſed. That no event takes place in God's providence, however trying it may be to us, which goes beyond his word, and is not an accompliſhment of his word, has been made fully to appear. There is a perfect harmony between God's word and the diſpenſations of his providence—the latter being nothing more than the former carried into execution. It is conceived, therefore, that there can be no ſuch thing as making a ſuitable improvement of afflictive providences, without being rightly affected towards God's holy word. The changes, which take place in this dying world, particularly the removal of our neareſt earthly friends, may occaſion many ſighs and tears; but if we are not led, by ſuch events, devoutly to attend to the Holy Scriptures, we may conclude that we have no other ſorrow than that of the world, which worketh death. Our mourning will laſt no longer than the novelty of the events. The occurrence of other events will ſoon croud out of our minds all the feelings of which theſe have been the occaſion. Afflictions, that are ſanctified, invariably lead the minds of thoſe, who are exerciſed therewith, to God; and in acquainting themſelves with him, they find it neceſſary to cultivate a thorough acquaintance with his holy word. If therefore, we would know what manner of ſpirit we are of, when we mourn for friends, we muſt faithfully examine whether the word of God is *precious* to us under his mighty hand.

2. This subject teaches, that afflictive providences are a manifestation of the truth and faithfulness of that God, who is the Author of the Holy Scriptures.

We have been considering the dispensations of providence, as a plain and faithful comment on divine revelation. If we candidly observe the events which have taken place, and are still taking place, in this fallen world, we shall be compelled to acknowledge, that no more trials fall to our lot, in this probationary state, than what we have been warned, and plainly warned, to be prepared for, in God's word. It becomes us, therefore, as friends to divine revelation, to acquiesce in all the allotments of providence. The chastisements we endure are inflicted by the hand of our heavenly Father, who is true and faithful in all his judgments.

They, who have the spirit and temper of God's children, and who, through the infinite grace of Christ, have a standing in his family, may rest assured, that all the dispensations of providence, however trying and crossing in themselves, will turn to their spiritual advantage. This the scriptures abundantly teach. All, who regard God's word, as being a "lamp unto their feet and a light unto their paths," discern, in their sorest trials, his covenant-faithfulness.

Are christians called to follow to the grave

their parents, their children, or the partners of their joys and ſorrows? They are conſcious, that ſuch ſcenes are nothing more than a fulfilment of God's word;—and that they are, by no means, inconſiſtent with any promiſes, which are made to the faithful in Chriſt Jeſus. Moſes and the prophets, Chriſt and the apoſtles abundantly warned them to live in expectation of being called to wade through ſuch ſcenes. Believing this, they ſee no juſt reaſon to complain, when near and dear earthly friends are torn from them, by the ſtroke of death. They only ſee God dealing with them according to his own word. His character, therefore, appears every way as amiable and glorious to them, in the diſpenſations of his providence, as it does on the pages of the inſpired volume.

They, who have teachable hearts, are profited, by being brought under the rod of correction, as they are by ſearching the Holy Scriptures. Afflicting providences, though trying to frail nature, work out for them, through the influences of the Holy Spirit, an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory." By ſuch events, chriſtians are brought nearer to God, and are made more deſirous of living to his honor and glory. They have a clearer view and ſight of him—of his greatneſs, his faithfulneſs, his juſtice and his mercy. Correſpondent with this idea the apoſtle ſaid to the Romans, *We know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them*

who are the called according to his purpose. Not a single affliction will be lost upon those, who are adopted into God's family, and who are made rich through the poverty of Christ. Under all their bereavements, they will finally say with the pious Psalmist, *It is good we have been afflicted.*

CHRISTIANS must, in some way, be thoroughly weaned from this empty world. They must learn experimentally to subordinate houses and lands, wives and children, and even their own lives, before they will be made "meet to become partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Of this they are assured by Moses and the prophets, and by Christ and the apostles. Therefore, all who feel right, acknowledge, that the trials, which come upon them in this world of discipline, are a manifestation of the great faithfulness of Him, who hath spoken to them in the Holy Scriptures, and whose words they esteem to be pure words, "more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold."

3. IF we will hear Moses and the prophets, or if we will make the word of God our study, we shall know in what light we are to view the death of saints.

ON this interesting point, the Holy Scriptures are very explicit. They teach us, that "it is appointed unto men once to die." Therefore, when

perſons of piety and uſefulneſs "go the way of all the earth," there is no room to call in queſtion the faithfulneſs of God to *them*. Death, though in itſelf a great evil, is ſo far from being a breach of the covenant which God enters into with believers, that it is eſſentially connected with it. This covenant could not be fulfilled in all its richneſs and extent, if their "corruptible did not put on incorruption, and their mortal did not put on immortality." To enter upon eternal life, the children of God muſt die; that is, their ſouls and bodies muſt be ſeparated. Viewed in itſelf, gloomy is the path; but, it is the appointed, and the only way into the kingdom of heaven. In this vale of tears, God cannot do all that for his children, which he has graciouſly promiſed; becauſe this world is not calculated for that near enjoyment of himſelf, and for thoſe bright manifeſtations of his glory, which he has reſerved for them.

THOUGH we may, with propriety, mourn, when called to attend the funeral ſolemnities of the righteous, as they were lights in this dark world; yet we may look upon *our* loſs, as *their* unſpeakable gain. We may adopt, on ſuch occaſions, the language of the inſpired Pſalmiſt—*Precious in the ſight of the Lord is the death of his ſaints*, and alſo of the Holy Spirit to the apoſtle John, *Bleſſed are the dead, who die in the Lord.*

WE are, this day, aſſembled in the houſe of

God, on a very mournful, as well as on an unuſual, occaſion. Before our eyes are now preſented, ſhrouded for the tomb, the remains of two of the inhabitants of this town, nearly allied by blood, who were uncommonly dear to their numerous acquaintances, and whoſe removal from this world muſt ſenſibly affect the hearts of many beſides their particular connections. Having witneſſed, for a long time, the progreſs of their reſpective diſeaſes, and experienced the pains of waſting nature, the cloſing ſcene of life, with reſpect to them both, has come —the hour, the ſolemn, the all-important hour of diſſolution has arrived—it is paſt—and their immortal ſouls have left their clayey tenements, and gone into the world of ſpirits. They now ſee as they are ſeen, and know as they are known—they know (ſolemn thought!) their everlaſting doom. But, "the memory of the juſt is bleſſed."

Mrs. WEST, poſſeſſing naturally a diſcerning, active mind, much improved by reading, converſation and reflection—and having an affectionate and friendly heart, as well as a great ſhare of wiſdom and prudence, was enabled to fill, with unuſual dignity, the important place in ſociety to which providence raiſed her. Her company was, at all times, agreeable—her converſation was ſprightly, edifying and inſtructive—and her preſence never failed to command reſpect from thoſe around her. She had long profeſſed friendſhip to the cauſe of Chriſt, and was an unſhaken and able ad-

vocate for the diſtinguiſhing doctrines of the goſpel. To experimental religion ſhe never appeared to make high pretenſions; yet her converſation, on this ſubject, evidenced a great acquaintance with her heart, and an accurate knowledge of the ſcriptural marks of true religion. Her long life* was filled up in doing good as ſhe had opportunity; and to thoſe, whom ſhe viewed as friends to the Lord Jeſus, ſhe was very prompt in giving tokens of her approbation and friendſhip. But her work is done —her ſun is ſet—no more will her voice be heard among the living. By her death a heavy ſtroke has come upon her ſurviving conſort, the paſtor of the church in this town, to whom, on this ſolemn occaſion, it may be expected, that I addreſs a few words.

Dear and Rev. Sir,

I FEEL that I am ſpeaking to one, who has been to me a father and a counſellor. It is altogether proper, therefore, that my words ſhould be few. You appear, this day, among your people, as one who has been ſmitten by the hand of the holy God. In the evening of life, when ſeemingly you ſtand in the moſt need of company, you are left peculiarly alone. We ſee your trial is great, and

* Mrs. ELIZABETH WEST, now deceaſed, was born at Newtown, Maſſachuſetts, Nov. 28th, (old ſtyle) 1730, and died Sept 15th, 1804.—She was daughter of the Hon. Ephraim Williams, Eſq. who was one of the firſt ſettlers of the town of Stockbridge.

we desire that your mind may be more than ever stayed on God; and that this affliction, the heaviest probably you ever experienced in your life, may increase your confidence in his righteous government. Acquiescing, as I trust you do, in the tho'ts which have been suggested in the illustration of this subject, you see that God does not warn you in this providence, beyond what he has always been warning you in his word. You are now called to put into practice those truths, in which you have many years professed to believe, and which you have often exhibited for the support and comfort of the people of your charge, when under trials similar to your own. To the fountain of wisdom and grace may you be enabled to repair, casting all your care upon the Lord, for he careth for his children. May this bereaving providence, through the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, be a mean of quickening you in the christian race, and of increasing your usefulness in the great work of the ministry, while God gives you strength to fulfil the duties of your office. May this people, who have so long been favored with your instruction, your counsel and your prayers, be disposed to remember you with the most tender affection, under your present trouble, and to plead with God to be with you to the last. And when your work is done, may you, through the infinite mercy of God in Christ, be admitted into that world where sin and sorrow will never enter, and where friends meet never to part.

In the death of the other perſon, the inhabitants of this town and county are called, in divine providence, to ſuſtain a great loſs, as the deceaſed was in the meridian of life, was very active in ſociety, and much improved in public concerns ;* but the ſtroke is particularly heavy upon his bereaved family, the widow and children, to whom it is ſuitable, that I now turn my addreſs.

Afflicted Friends,

IT is not in my power to deſcribe the greatneſs of the loſs, which has come upon you, in the death of your huſband and father. Nor is this important. Time and your own experience, if you ſhould be ſuffered to continue in the world, will teach you this, as faſt as you may be able to bear it. Long have you been warned to prepare for the ſcene, which is now opened to you, under the righteous providence of God. Your trials are great ; but not greater than what others have experienced before you. It has pleaſed God to make many widows in the world, and to deprive many children of kind and affectionate parents ; but he does not leave the widow nor the fatherleſs without an ample ſource of comfort. Under their bereavements,

* Mr. Dwight was born at Great-Barrington, September 15th, 1757, and died September 15th, 1804. "At an early age he embarked in our revolutionary ſtruggle with Great-Britain, and continued in it, until our Independence was finally ſecured ; at the cloſe of it, he received the appointment of County Clerk, the duties of which he performed with accuracy and fidelity, until a ſhort time before his death, when his declining ſtate of health compelled him to reſign."

they are allowed to lean upon Him, who came into the world "to bind up the broken-hearted," and "to comfort all that mourn." They are assured also, that the greatest good is not lessened nor tarnished, when earthly friends are cut off by the stroke of death. The truth never fails to comfort those who are willing to be comforted; or, in other words, who have "tasted and seen that the Lord is good." No scenes can be opened in this world, so afflictive as to destroy the happiness of those who have taken God for their portion.

From you, who are now written a widow, God has taken away the head of your family; but the trial has been accompanied with peculiar mercies. You had opportunity to see your dear companion satisfied with living, and apparently rejoicing that he was in the hands of God. The world, in his view, had lost its importance; and he was ready and cheerful in acknowledging to you, and to all his friends who gave him opportunity, that his only dependence for salvation was on the merits of Jesus Christ. Reflecting on this hopeful change in the views and feelings of your deceased husband, which was noticed for sometime before his death, and the evidence of which increased as the hour of dissolution approached, you are undoubtedly led to lament the loss of his prayers, his pious example, his counsels and his admonitions in your family. But, the God in whom you profess to believe has done perfectly right; though he has sealed in death

the lips of your companion. He has brought you under his mighty hand, and he alone can ſupport and comfort you. If, in his great mercy, he ſhould ſee fit to do this, he will give you a ſight of your own ill deſert and of his juſtice—he will give you ſubmiſſion ;—and what better thing could he do for you ?

May God carry you through your remaining trials, and fit you to follow him, who has left your ſociety and gone into the eternal world. May the Holy Spirit that teacheth all things, diſpoſe you to receive inſtruction, to be humble, to be ſubmiſſive, to be more prayerful, and more engaged in all the duties of religion ; particularly to think more than ever on the duty and obligation of watching for the ſouls of thoſe committed to your care, as one who is to give an account. To the infinite compaſſion and mercy of the divine Redeemer we now commend you, and your bereaved, your fatherleſs children.

The deaths of theſe two perſons have made a large number of mourners, and the relatives and connections of one are the relatives and connections of the other. They all will ſuffer the exhortation, that they humble themſelves under the mighty hand of God. They may live to ſee, that theſe afflictions, though at preſent "not joyous but grievous," are connected with ſome unſpeakable good to their own ſouls, or to the ſouls of others. Let

them not diſtruſt the goodneſs of that God, in whom they "live, move, and have their being," now he has laid his hand upon them. Let them not wait for louder warnings than thoſe which are, this day, ſounding in their ears, and which are to be viewed as a fulfilment of God's holy word. Their turn will alſo come, and prepared or not prepared, they muſt go when called. May the Lord give them all to realize their expoſedneſs to death, and may he quicken them to have their lamps trimmed and burning. Being faithful to God in their reſpective ſtations, and perſevering in faithfulneſs to the death, they will "receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him."

Let all this aſſembly be exhorted to improve the ſolemn ſcenes of this day. God is ſpeaking to us all,—and his language is,—*Be ye alſo ready.* Let us all ſeriouſly reflect on our condition as candidates for eternity. Our ſands are ſwiftly running—eternal ſcenes are at hand. In a few days, it will be ſaid of us, as it now is of our deceaſed friends, whoſe remains we are about to follow to the grave, that we are dead. Let us turn the preſent moments to the beſt poſſible account, and no longer boaſt ourſelves of to-morrow. God grant that in the great and awful day of Chriſt's appearing, we may be found of him in peace, and be admitted into that glorious kingdom, where all tears will be wiped away from our eyes.

Amen.

FUNERAL SERMON.

LUKE 16. 31.

AND HE SAID UNTO HIM, IF THEY HEAR NOT MOSES AND THE PROPHETS, NEITHER WILL THEY BE PERSUADED THOUGH ONE ROSE FROM THE DEAD.

TO perſuade men to prepare for the great and intereſting ſcene of exchanging worlds, though it is a work altogether reaſonable, and eſſentially connected with the happineſs of their immortal ſouls, has ever been found a difficult taſk. The moſt judicious and eminently pious parents have been heard to acknowledge their total inability, merely by the force of counſel and arguments, to diſpoſe their children ſo to "number their days, as to apply their hearts unto wiſdom." All the ſkill of the moſt able and faithful miniſters has repeatedly been baffled, in their attempts to make their fellow-ſinners think ſeriouſly of death, and live with reference to the eternal world. And the prophets, though enabled by the inſpiration of the Holy Spirit to diſcloſe future events, yet after plainly delivering God's meſſage to his people, were wont to make this affecting exclamation, *Lord, who hath believed our report?*

To expoſe this amazing ſtupidity and unteachableneſs in regard to the concerns of a future world, ſo generally obſervable among men, was one object of the divine Saviour in delivering the parable, of which the words of the text are a part. The whole parable is as follows :—
"There was a certain rich man, which was cloth-
"ed in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptu-
"ouſly every day. And there was a certain beg-
"gar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate
"full of ſores, and deſiring to be fed with the
"crumbs which fell from the rich man's table:
"moreover the dogs came and licked his ſores.
"And it came to paſs, that the beggar died, and
"was carried by the angels into Abraham's bo-
"ſom : the rich man alſo died, and was buri-
"ed ;—And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being
"in torments, and ſeeth Abraham afar off, and
"Lazarus in his boſom. And he cried, and ſaid,
"Father Abraham, have mercy on me ; and ſend
"Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger
"in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tor-
"mented in this flame. But Abraham ſaid, Son,
"remember that thou in thy life time receiv-
"edſt thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil
"things : but now he is comforted, and thou art
"tormented. And, beſides all this, between us
"and you there is a great gulf fixed : ſo that
"they which would paſs from hence to you can-
"not ; neither can they paſs to us that would
"come from thence. Then he ſaid, I pray thee,
"therefore, father, that thou wouldeſt ſend him

" to my father's houſe :—for I have five breth-
" ren ; that he may teſtify unto them, leſt they
" alſo come into this place of torment. Abraham
" ſaith unto him, they have Moſes and the
" prophets ; let them hear them. And he ſaid,
" Nay, father Abraham : but if one went unto
" them from the dead, they will repent. And
" he ſaid unto him, if they hear not Moſes and
" the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded
" though one roſe from the dead."

When this unhappy man, in the torments of hell, was aſſured of the ſufficiency of divine Revelation, he appeared to feel, that his brethren would ſlight all the warnings contained in this, as he fooliſhly did ; and, therefore, interceded for ſomething greater. He is repreſented as deſiring a meſſenger might be ſent to them from the dead ; as if, from ſuch an one, warnings might be communicated, which they would not be able to withſtand. To all his importunity Abraham put an end, by aſſuring him of the fruitleſs of any ſuch extraordinary means for their conviction. He gave him to underſtand that the evidences of a divine revelation were ſo clear, and the warnings therein contained ſo full and abundant, that if they would not hearken to Moſes and the prophets, neither would they be perſuaded to a thorough repentance, though one ſhould ariſe from the dead to viſit them ;—that the ſame prejudices and luſts, which influenced them to deſpiſe the methods of inſtruction with which they

were already favored, would also lead them to slight and forget all that could be said to them, by such a messenger as he desired.

In this parable, particularly in that part of it now selected for a text, we are taught to put a very high value on the Holy Scriptures. Their importance, as being the word of God, and their sufficiency with respect to those instructions and warnings which men need as candidates for eternity, are here urged, by the divine Saviour, with great clearness and force. Looking to these words, saints may conclude, that the only sources of consolation under afflictive providences, are to be sought for in the *Holy Scriptures*; and in view of them sinners may infer, that they cannot possibly give greater proof of obstinacy of heart, than by disregarding the warnings *they* contain.

In discoursing further from these words, on the present solemn occasion, it is proposed to show,

I. That men may never expect to have warnings to prepare for death, which are more full, more solemn, or clothed with higher authority, than those that are contained in the Holy Scriptures.

II. If they can withstand such warnings, they may know they have obstinacy enough to die in their sins, and to be driven away in their iniquity.

III. Conclude with an improvement.

In the firſt place, it is to be ſhown, that men may never expect to have warnings to prepare for death, which are more full, more ſolemn, or clothed with higher authority, than thoſe that are contained in the Holy Scriptures.

Here it may be obſerved,

1. That in the Holy Scriptures, the Lord Jehovah himſelf ſpeaks to men.

Admitting, that the books of the Old and New Teſtaments are a revelation from God, which is abundantly evident from the miracles, that were wrought in confirmation of their truth—from the numerous prophecies in them, which have been, and ſtill are fulfilling—from the excellency and perfection of the ſyſtem of religion, which they contain—from the entire harmony of the writers, though they lived in different parts and ages of the world, and from many other inconteſtible proofs;—admitting, that theſe books are what they claim to be, and what all good men believe them to be, a revelation from God, it will follow, that they cannot poſſibly be clothed with higher authority. The words they contain are the words of the Lord Jehovah. It is not ſufficiently realized by men, that when they read the Holy Scriptures, they read a revelation from God to them. The Lord addreſſes them, in his word, as really as he did Moſes, when he ſpake to him with an audible voice from the burning buſh; or when he called to him out of the midſt of the

cloud, which covered mount Sinai. What if the heavens were daily rent, by the voice of the Almighty, ſpeaking to the children of men? The words communicated, in this way, would not be clothed with higher authority, than thoſe which we now have opportunity to read in the Holy Scriptures. On the pages of the inſpired volume, the words recorded are all truth, becauſe they came from the God of truth. There, the Lord Jehovah addreſſes us, as rational and accountable creatures and as ſinners, bound into the eternal world. His language to us is the language of a God of juſtice, and yet of a God, boundleſs in mercy. He has plainly revealed to us our fallen, ruined ſtate, and the great compaſſion he has had on us, in the proviſion and gift of his Son, whoſe blood has been ſhed on the croſs, to make an atonement for ſin. He has ſet life and death before us, and, with great engagedneſs, called upon us to ſhun the "broad way, which leadeth to deſtruction," and to direct our feet into the "narrow way which leadeth unto life." He has aſſured us, that if we continue in a ſtate of alienation from him, and roll ſin as a ſweet morſel under our tongues, we muſt expect to lie down in everlaſting ſorrow;—that if we lay up our treaſure on the earth, we muſt expect that death will blaſt all our hopes, and terminate all our proſpects of enjoyment. He has alſo faithfully warned us, as we regard our precious and immortal ſouls, and as we reſpect his authority, to avoid all delays in theſe important concerns;—that we

attend immediately to the things, which belong to our peace, before they ſhall be everlaſtingly hidden from our eyes. He is plain and poſitive in the injunction, that we "boaſt not ourſelves of to-morrow," becauſe we "know not what a day may bring forth;"—that we "be ready; for in ſuch an hour as we think not the Son of man cometh."

These are the ſubjects on which God addreſſes us, in his holy word. Can we, as rational creatures, affirm that we are not intereſted in them? Can we ſoberly ſay, that the Lord Jehovah is not ſincere in his declarations? Has he left any ground for us to complain, that he has not been ſufficiently explicit?—that duty is not made plain?—and that his warnings and threatenings are not clear? No; my brethren ſuch has been the divine faithfulneſs, that the door is ſhut againſt all inſinuations of this kind. We may never expect to have warnings to prepare for death, and the great day of judgment, which are more full, more ſolemn, or clothed with higher authority, than thoſe that are contained in the Holy Scriptures. The warnings, which we, there, read, are the workings of God, and the threatenings are his threatenings. They are addreſſed to *us*, and they come with the ſame infinite weight and authority, as if we heard them announced, by an audible voice from heaven. It is nothing but unbelief, and amazing unbelief, that keeps men

from trembling, when they read, in the ſacred oracles, the ſolemn addreſſes from the Lord Jehovah.

Our divine teacher intimates, in the text, that the writings of Moſes and the prophets, by which he could mean the books of the Old Teſtament only, contained ſuch inſtructions and warnings, and were ſo full of light, that if men would not regard them, they would not be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead. For us, in this age of the world, much more has been done; for we are favored with the important addition of the New-Teſtament, and we ſee the canon of ſcripture completed. God has communicated to us all he ever deſigns to communicate to men, on the great and intereſting ſubjects, which relate to the kingdom of his Son, and the concerns of our immortal ſouls. Though the faith of chriſtians looks forward to a time, when "the earth ſhall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the ſea," yet they are not expecting this to take place in conſequence of any additional revelation. In that glorious period of the church, there will be no need of any other bible, than that to which we now have acceſs. God has cloſed his declarations, his warnings, his threatenings, his predictions and his promiſes. And what more could he ſay to alarm us, as ſinners, or to ſupport and animate us, as chriſtians? Can we conceive of motives to diſſuade us from ſin,

and to attach us to the duties of religion, which are greater and more powerful, than thoſe we find in the Holy Scriptures? It is preſumed we cannot. Well, therefore, may our mouths be ſtopped, and we ſtand aſtoniſhed at our own unbelief.

2. THE warnings of God in his *providence* are, in no inſtances, to be conſidered greater or more ſolemn, than thoſe contained in the Holy Scriptures.

WHAT is now aſſerted may, poſſibly, not correſpond with the views of thoſe, who have not attended particularly to the ſubject. It is acknowledged, that God, in the diſpenſations of his providence, cauſes ſome moſt awful and alarming events to take place;—events which are powerfully calculated to arouſe men from their ſtupidity, and to make them feel the importance of being immediately prepared to meet their Judge. Such events are not unfrequent. What ravages among our fellow-creatures, our acquaintances and relations are made by the king of terrors! How ſuddenly are we ſometimes bereft of our deareſt earthly friends; and what ſorrow and anguiſh of ſoul do ſuch bereavements occaſion! It is readily admitted, that ſuch ſudden and awful providences give us a greater ſhock, for a little time, than the warnings of God's word. The former make us tremble and quake, while we can hear the latter, without any ſpecial emotions. But, from

this, are we warranted to draw the conclusion, that when such events take place, the warning to us is really greater, than any we find in the Holy Scriptures? Shall we say, that they communicate more real instruction? This does not appear to be the case. There are as many awful and alarming things threatened, in divine revelation, to nations and to individual persons, as are ever known to take place in the dispensations of providence. On the pages of inspiration, also are recorded, for our instruction, providences which are as solemn and awful, as any with which we are ever personally conversant.

What we call providence is nothing more than a fulfilment of that which is plainly revealed in the holy scriptures. God has not, in one instance, dealt with saints or sinners differently from what he gave them reason to expect in his word. No trials are brought on families, nor on individual persons, however grievous they may seem, which exceed the threatenings, that are to be found in divine revelation. It is owing to unbelief, and to nothing else, that men are not as much alarmed, and do not appear as sober and solemn, when they read the warnings of the sacred oracles, as when they hear of the death of a particular friend; or when they are called, as is sometimes the case, to attend the funeral solemnities of those, whose lives were instantly taken, without having opportunity to put up to an of-

fended God even one petition. Inſtances of mortality of this kind are nothing more than what the Moſt High threatens in his word. If ſuch paſſages of divine truth as the following—*Thou knoweſt not what a day may bring forth—Be ready; for in ſuch an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh—The day of the Lord ſo cometh as a thief in the night*, were made to take hold of the hearts of men, they would ſee them to contain warnings, which are as full and ſolemn, as thoſe communicated to them, by the changes that take place in this dying world. It appears, therefore, that we ought to view the afflictive ſcenes, opened to us in divine providence, not as exceeding the warnings of God's word; but, as being an accompliſhment of them. When "man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the ſtreets," we barely ſee the Holy Scriptures fulfilled. In the diſpenſations of providence, God never goes beyond his word. His word may be ſaid to lead the way, as to inſtructions and warnings; and this is one ſenſe in which he hath magnified his word above all his name.

3. Men may never expect to have warnings, which are more full, or more ſolemn, from the deſk, nor from any chriſtian friends, than thoſe that are contained in the Holy Scriptures.

The miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt, who are conſecrated to guide the ſouls of men, and who are directed to "reprove, rebuke and exhort with all

long ſuffering and doctrine," have to repair to the Holy Scriptures for all the inſtructions, which they are enabled to communicate. They may be engaging and powerful in their addreſſes, and clear and forcible in their reaſonings on religious ſubjects—they may diſcourſe with ſuch feeling and energy on the importance of being prepared for the great ſcenes of the future world, and they may accompany their inſtructions with ſuch ſolemn warnings, as to make the hearts of the ungodly tremble; but after all, it is impoſſible that they ſhould exceed the inſtructions and warnings, contained in the word of God. This is a point which may be made evident in a few words, They, who ſtand in the place of ſpiritual watchmen, are dependent on the Holy Scriptures for all the knowledge, which they have of God's warnings and threatenings. To no other ſource can they go for the inſtructions, which they attempt to give. As faithful men, and as men who feel themſelves bound to declare God's counſel to their fellow-ſinners, they can never go beyond his word. They are commanded to give themſelves to ſtudy, that their profiting may appear, and that the people of God may be edified; but, after the moſt painful reſearches, they are not able to publiſh a ſingle truth or duty, which is not derived from divine revelation. They can ſay nothing further of the conſequences of living and dying in ſin, than what is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. They can ſuggeſt no

motives more powerful to perſuade ſinners to immediate repentance, than thoſe, which are contained on the pages of inſpiration.

The moſt able, learned and pious miniſters are ready to acknowledge, that they obtain from that revelation, which God has made to men, all the inſtructions, which they are enabled to give either ſaints or ſinners. They can warn no farther, than that has warned. It is true, that the minds of ſinners may be more ſolemnly impreſſed, under the powerful preaching of the word, than when they read the Holy Scriptures; but, we are not to infer from this, that the preacher gives greater and more ſolemn warning than what are to be found in the ſacred volume. If he is faithful, he gives the ſame warnings; but he gives more in addition. He never goes beyond what is plainly revealed. From the Holy Scriptures he derives all his inſtructions. The eloquence of a Whitfield excited the attention and admiration of thouſands; yet he never communicated any inſtruction, which, in point of importance, or of its ſolemnity, exceeded, or even equalled, the language and addreſs of the inſpired writers. He gave many warnings, and he did it in a very ſolemn and moving manner; but, he was dependent on the Holy Scriptures for all his knowledge of thoſe truths, which relate to the ſouls of men, and for the arguments with which they were to be enforced.

PARENTS can warn their children no further than they have inſtructions from divine revelation; and whoever pretends to go beyond divine revelation, in giving inſtructions and warnings, pretends to be wiſe above what is written. To be chargeable with this is to incur great guilt in the ſight of Him, who, in the ſcriptures of truth, hath ſpoken to men. It is directly impeaching the wiſdom and goodneſs of God; and to manifeſt his abhorrence of ſuch arrogancy, as well as to warn men againſt being guilty of it, he expreſsly ſays, *If any man ſhall add unto theſe things*, GOD *ſhall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.*

4. IF our departed friends were to return, and attempt to warn us againſt perſiſting in a life of ſin, they could ſay nothing, which would be more weighty or ſolemn, than what we find in the Holy Scriptures.

IN the parable, of which the words of the text are the concluſion, the rich man in hell is repreſented as ſpeaking a different language. He bro't out the feelings of the unbelieving and hardened Jews of the Saviour's day, and of the impenitent of every age. Undervaluing the evidences of the revelation which God had given, he reſorted to ſigns and wonders, as more important means of conviction. A meſſenger from the dead, as he vainly thought, would have a greater effect than any thing which could be found in the Holy Scriptures.

It is acknowledged, that if such an event, as that for which he interceded, should take place, it would make us tremble, more than the reading of the scriptures, the preaching of the word, or the ordinary occurrences of divine providence. Notwithstanding this, there would not be more real warning in it. We should be especially struck with the novelty and strangeness of the event. But, if such things were to be frequent, they would loose, in a degree, their terror as is the case with death, and with the faithful preaching of divine truth. This would be owing to that hardness of heart, which is a characteristic of depraved men. We all have such unteachable hearts, by nature, that the frequent repetition of solemn providences, which are calculated to soften, do in reality harden, them.

Besides; how irrational is the supposition, that our deceased friends, whatever may be their state in the world of spirits, if they should be suffered to return, could give us warnings which would be more solemn and weighty, or better fitted to excite our attention and to fill our minds with a proper concern, than those we already have, in the Holy Scriptures? This also would be impeaching the wisdom and goodness of Him, who hath undertaken to instruct men, in regard to the infinite concerns of eternity. In that revelation, which is put into our hands, we have the warnings of the Lord Jehovah, and we cannot have greater.

I PROCEED to ſhow,

II THAT if men can withſtand ſuch warnings, they may know they have obſtinacy enough to die in their ſins, and to be driven away in their iniquity.

IT has been ſhown, under the preceding head, that men may never expect to have warnings, which exceed thoſe, that they may read in God's word, either in regard to their importance, ſolemnity, or authority. If they can reſiſt *theſe*, they can reſiſt unto death. If they can reſiſt *theſe*, they may know they have hardneſs and unbelief enough in their hearts to withſtand the moſt ſolemn providences, which ever take place in this world; and, that if one of their acquaintance and moſt intimate friends ſhould ariſe from the dead, and with an horrid appearance, and in awful manner, aſſure them, from his own experience, that there was, indeed, a place of torment for the wicked, it would be totally inſufficient to make them loathe ſin. If they can reſiſt the inſtructions and warnings of God's holy word, they may know, that if they were brought to a ſick and dying bed, and had an expectation of plunging, in a few moments, into the eternal world of miſery, it would not all be ſufficient to change ſuch hearts as they poſſeſs. Such a proſpect might make them tremble and quake; but, it would be inſufficient, of itſelf, to produce *love*. Often has this been acknowledged by the wicked, in their dying moments. They have found, by their own

ſorrowful experience, that the greateſt proſpect of death would not bring them to an acquaintance with religious exerciſes—would not give them a ſight of the beauty and excellency of the divine character. And men need no other proof, that their hearts are thus hard and obſtinate, than their reſiſting the warnings of God in the Holy Scriptures.

We may learn ſomething of the exceeding wickedneſs and obſtinacy of the human heart, by looking to the conduct of thoſe Jews, who were ſpectators of the raiſing of Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, from the dead. They ſaw this great event—they ſaw Lazarus come out of the grave, after having been, four days, buried, and muſt have known that it was the finger of God; and yet they had wickedneſs and malice enough in their hearts to reſiſt all this evidence, and even to ſeek his life. The ſoldiers, alſo, who were eye-witneſſes of the reſurrection of Chriſt, made it evident, that they had the ſame wickedneſs and malice in their hearts. They ſaw this great event—they heard the earthquake, and, for a time, became themſelves as dead men; and yet ſuffered themſelves to be hired to bear falſe teſtimony againſt the whole.

Each of theſe miracles was better calculated to convince men of the almighty power of God, and of the importance of attending to his word, than the meſſenger would be, whom the rich man in

hell is repreſented as requeſting for a warning to his brethren. With great propriety, therefore, might it be ſaid to him in reply—*If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.* It may be naturally inferred from this reply, that no perſon can give greater proof of obſtinacy of heart, than by diſregarding the warnings, contained in divine revelation. To be deaf to theſe is certain evidence of ſpiritual death. In the Holy Scriptures God hath ſpoken to men, and though he ſpeaks to them in other ways, yet in none with more ſolemnity, nor with more engagedneſs. If, therefore, men can withſtand ſuch plain and ſolemn warnings, as are in God's word, they need not wait to have greater, before they determine, that they have obſtinacy enough in their hearts to die in their ſins, and to be driven away in their iniquity.

The ſubject will now be concluded with an Improvement.

1. The manner in which we are diſpoſed to treat the Holy Scriptures determines what effect afflictions have on our minds.

We may be much affected under the ſpecial providences of God—we may be borne down under his mighty hand; but, if we at the ſame time, can diſregard the warnings of the *bible*, we are without evidence, that ſuch providences have any ſaving

effect. This a thought with which our minds ought to be deeply impreſſed. That no event takes place in God's providence, however trying it may be to us, which goes beyond his word, and is not an accompliſhment of his word, has been made fully to appear. There is a perfect harmony between God's word and the diſpenſations of his providence—the latter being nothing more than the former carried into execution. It is conceived, therefore, that there can be no ſuch thing as making a ſuitable improvement of afflictive providences, without being rightly affected towards God's holy word. The changes, which take place in this dying world, particularly the removal of our neareſt earthly friends, may occaſion many ſighs and tears; but if we are not led, by ſuch events, devoutly to attend to the Holy Scriptures, we may conclude that we have no other ſorrow than that of the world, which worketh death. Our mourning will laſt no longer than the novelty of the events. The occurrence of other events will ſoon croud out of our minds all the feelings of which theſe have been the occaſion. Afflictions, that are ſanctified, invariably lead the minds of thoſe, who are exerciſed therewith, to God; and in acquainting themſelves with him, they find it neceſſary to cultivate a thorough acquaintance with his holy word. If therefore, we would know what manner of ſpirit we are of, when we mourn for friends, we muſt faithfully examine whether the word of God is *precious* to us under his mighty hand.

2. THIS ſubject teaches, that afflictive providences are a manifeſtation of the truth and faithfulneſs of that God, who is the Author of the Holy Scriptures.

WE have been conſidering the diſpenſations of providence, as a plain and faithful comment on divine revelation. If we candidly obſerve the events which have taken place, and are ſtill taking place, in this fallen world, we ſhall be compelled to acknowledge, that no more trials fall to our lot, in this probationary ſtate, than what we have been warned, and plainly warned, to be prepared for, in God's word. It becomes us, therefore, as friends to divine revelation, to acquieſce in all the allotments of providence. The chaſtiſements we endure are inflicted by the hand of our heavenly Father, who is true and faithful in all his judgments.

THEY, who have the ſpirit and temper of God's children, and who, through the infinite grace of Chriſt, have a ſtanding in his family, may reſt aſſured, that all the diſpenſations of providence, however trying and croſſing in themſelves, will turn to their ſpiritual advantage. This the ſcriptures abundantly teach. All, who regard God's word, as being a "lamp unto their feet and a light unto their paths," diſcern, in their ſoreſt trials, his covenant-faithfulneſs.

ARE chriſtians called to follow to the grave

their parents, their children, or the partners of their joys and ſorrows ? They are conſcious, that ſuch ſcenes are nothing more than a fulfilment of God's word ;—and that they are, by no means, inconſiſtent with any promiſes, which are made to the faithful in Chriſt Jeſus. Moſes and the prophets, Chriſt and the apoſtles abundantly warned them to live in expectation of being called to wade through ſuch ſcenes. Believing this, they ſee no juſt reaſon to complain, when near and dear earthly friends are torn from them, by the ſtroke of death. They only ſee God dealing with them according to his own word. His character, therefore, appears every way as amiable and glorious to them, in the diſpenſations of his providence, as it does on the pages of the inſpired volume.

They, who have teachable hearts, are profited, by being brought under the rod of correction, as they are by ſearching the Holy Scriptures. Afflicting providences, though trying to frail nature, work out for them, through the influences of the Holy Spirit, an " exceeding and eternal weight of glory." By ſuch events, chriſtians are brought nearer to God, and are made more deſirous of living to his honor and glory. They have a clearer view and ſight of him—of his greatneſs, his faithfulneſs, his juſtice and his mercy. Correſpondent with this idea the apoſtle ſaid to the Romans, *We know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them*

who are the called according to his purpose. Not a single affliction will be lost upon those, who are adopted into God's family, and who are made rich through the poverty of Christ. Under all their bereavements, they will finally say with the pious Psalmist, *It is good we have been afflicted.*

CHRISTIANS must, in some way, be thoroughly weaned from this empty world. They must learn experimentally to subordinate houses and lands, wives and children, and even their own lives, before they will be made "meet to become partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Of this they are assured by Moses and the prophets, and by Christ and the apostles. Therefore, all who feel right, acknowledge, that the trials, which come upon them in this world of discipline, are a manifestation of the great faithfulness of Him, who hath spoken to them in the Holy Scriptures, and whose words they esteem to be pure words, "more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold."

3. IF we will hear Moses and the prophets, or if we will make the word of God our study, we shall know in what light we are to view the death of saints.

ON this interesting point, the Holy Scriptures are very explicit. They teach us, that "it is appointed unto men once to die." Therefore, when

perſons of piety and uſefulneſs "go the way of all the earth," there is no room to call in queſtion the faithfulneſs of God to *them*. Death, though in itſelf a great evil, is ſo far from being a breach of the covenant which God enters into with believers, that it is eſſentially connected with it. This covenant could not be fulfilled in all its richneſs and extent, if their "corruptible did not put on incorruption, and their mortal did not put on immortality." To enter upon eternal life, the children of God muſt die; that is, their ſouls and bodies muſt be ſeparated. Viewed in itſelf, gloomy is the path; but, it is the appointed, and the only way into the kingdom of heaven. In this vale of tears, God cannot do all that for his children, which he has graciouſly promiſed; becauſe this world is not calculated for that near enjoyment of himſelf, and for thoſe bright manifeſtations of his glory, which he has reſerved for them.

THOUGH we may, with propriety, mourn, when called to attend the funeral ſolemnities of the righteous, as they were lights in this dark world; yet we may look upon *our* loſs, as *their* unſpeakable gain. We may adopt, on ſuch occaſions, the language of the inſpired Pſalmiſt—*Precious in the ſight of the Lord is the death of his ſaints*, and alſo of the Holy Spirit to the apoſtle John, *Bleſſed are the dead, who die in the Lord.*

WE are, this day, aſſembled in the houſe of

God, on a very mournful, as well as on an unuſual, occaſion. Before our eyes are now preſented, ſhrouded for the tomb, the remains of two of the inhabitants of this town, nearly allied by blood, who were uncommonly dear to their numerous acquaintances, and whoſe removal from this world muſt ſenſibly affect the hearts of many beſides their particular connections. Having witneſſed, for a long time, the progreſs of their reſpective diſeaſes, and experienced the pains of waſting nature, the cloſing ſcene of life, with reſpect to them both, has come—the hour, the ſolemn, the all-important hour of diſſolution has arrived—it is paſt—and their immortal ſouls have left their clayey tenements, and gone into the world of ſpirits. They now ſee as they are ſeen, and know as they are known—they know (ſolemn thought!) their everlaſting doom. But, "the memory of the juſt is bleſſed."

MRS. WEST, poſſeſſing naturally a diſcerning, active mind, much improved by reading, converſation and reflection—and having an affectionate and friendly heart, as well as a great ſhare of wiſdom and prudence, was enabled to fill, with unuſual dignity, the important place in ſociety to which providence raiſed her. Her company was, at all times, agreeable—her converſation was ſprightly, edifying and inſtructive—and her preſence never failed to command reſpect from thoſe around her. She had long profeſſed friendſhip to the cauſe of Chriſt, and was an unſhaken and able ad-

vocate for the diſtinguiſhing doctrines of the goſpel. To experimental religion ſhe never appeared to make high pretenſions; yet her converſation, on this ſubject, evidenced a great acquaintance with her heart, and an accurate knowledge of the ſcriptural marks of true religion. Her long life* was filled up in doing good as ſhe had opportunity; and to thoſe, whom ſhe viewed as friends to the Lord Jeſus, ſhe was very prompt in giving tokens of her approbation and friendſhip. But her work is done —her ſun is ſet—no more will her voice be heard among the living. By her death a heavy ſtroke has come upon her ſurviving conſort, the paſtor of the church in this town, to whom, on this ſolemn occaſion, it may be expected, that I addreſs a few words.

Dear and Rev. Sir,

I FEEL that I am ſpeaking to one, who has been to me a father and a counſellor. It is altogether proper, therefore, that my words ſhould be few. You appear, this day, among your people, as one who has been ſmitten by the hand of the holy God. In the evening of life, when ſeemingly you ſtand in the moſt need of company, you are left peculiarly alone. We ſee your trial is great, and

* Mrs. ELIZABETH WEST, now deceaſed, was born at Newtown, Maſſachuſetts, Nov. 28th, (old ſtyle) 1750, and died Sept 15th, 1804.—She was daughter of the Hon. Ephraim Williams, Eſq who was one of the firſt ſettlers of the town of Stockbridge.

we desire that your mind may be more than ever stayed on God; and that this affliction, the heaviest probably you ever experienced in your life, may increase your confidence in his righteous government. Acquiescing, as I trust you do, in the tho'ts which have been suggested in the illustration of this subject, you see that God does not warn you in this providence, beyond what he has always been warning you in his word. You are now called to put into practice those truths, in which you have many years professed to believe, and which you have often exhibited for the support and comfort of the people of your charge, when under trials similar to your own. To the fountain of wisdom and grace may you be enabled to repair, casting all your care upon the Lord, for he careth for his children. May this bereaving providence, through the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, be a mean of quickening you in the christian race, and of increasing your usefulness in the great work of the ministry, while God gives you strength to fulfil the duties of your office. May this people, who have so long been favored with your instruction, your counsel and your prayers, be disposed to remember you with the most tender affection, under your present trouble, and to plead with God to be with you to the last. And when your work is done, may you, through the infinite mercy of God in Christ, be admitted into that world where sin and sorrow will never enter, and where friends meet never to part.

In the death of the other perſon, the inhabitants of this town and county are called, in divine providence, to ſuſtain a great loſs, as the deceaſed was in the meridian of life, was very active in ſociety, and much improved in public concerns ;* but the ſtroke is particularly heavy upon his bereaved family, the widow and children, to whom it is ſuitable, that I now turn my addreſs.

Afflicted Friends,

IT is not in my power to deſcribe the greatneſs of the loſs, which has come upon you, in the death of your huſband and father. Nor is this important. Time and your own experience, if you ſhould be ſuffered to continue in the world, will teach you this, as faſt as you may be able to bear it. Long have you been warned to prepare for the ſcene, which is now opened to you, under the righteous providence of God. Your trials are great ; but not greater than what others have experienced before you. It has pleaſed God to make many widows in the world, and to deprive many children of kind and affectionate parents ; but he does not leave the widow nor the fatherleſs without an ample ſource of comfort. Under their bereavements,

* Mr. Dwight was born at Great-Barrington, September 15th, 1757, and died September 15th, 1804. "At an early age he embarked in our revolutionary ſtruggle with Great-Britain, and continued in it, until our Independence was finally ſecured ; at the cloſe of it, he received the appointment of County Clerk, the duties of which he performed with accuracy and fidelity, until a ſhort time before his death, when his declining ſtate of health compelled him to reſign."

they are allowed to lean upon Him, who came into the world "to bind up the broken-hearted," and "to comfort all that mourn." They are assured also, that the greatest good is not lessened nor tarnished, when earthly friends are cut off by the stroke of death. The truth never fails to comfort those who are willing to be comforted; or, in other words, who have "tasted and seen that the Lord is good." No scenes can be opened in this world, so afflictive as to destroy the happiness of those who have taken God for their portion.

From you, who are now written a widow, God has taken away the head of your family; but the trial has been accompanied with peculiar mercies. You had opportunity to see your dear companion satisfied with living, and apparently rejoicing that he was in the hands of God. The world, in his view, had lost its importance; and he was ready and cheerful in acknowledging to you, and to all his friends who gave him opportunity, that his only dependence for salvation was on the merits of Jesus Christ. Reflecting on this hopeful change in the views and feelings of your deceased husband, which was noticed for sometime before his death, and the evidence of which increased as the hour of dissolution approached, you are undoubtedly led to lament the loss of his prayers, his pious example, his counsels and his admonitions in your family. But, the God in whom you profess to believe has done perfectly right; though he has sealed in death

the lips of your companion. He has brought you under his mighty hand, and he alone can ſupport and comfort you. If, in his great mercy, he ſhould ſee fit to do this, he will give you a ſight of your own ill deſert and of his juſtice—he will give you ſubmiſſion ;—and what better thing could he do for you ?

May God carry you through your remaining trials, and fit you to follow him, who has left your ſociety and gone into the eternal world. May the Holy Spirit that teacheth all things, diſpoſe you to receive inſtruction, to be humble, to be ſubmiſſive, to be more prayerful, and more engaged in all the duties of religion ; particularly to think more than ever on the duty and obligation of watching for the ſouls of thoſe committed to your care, as one who is to give an account. To the infinite compaſſion and mercy of the divine Redeemer we now commend you, and your bereaved, your fatherleſs children.

The deaths of theſe two perſons have made a large number of mourners, and the relatives and connections of one are the relatives and connections of the other. They all will ſuffer the exhortation, that they humble themſelves under the mighty hand of God. They may live to ſee, that theſe afflictions, though at preſent "not joyous but grievous," are connected with ſome unſpeakable good to their own ſouls, or to the ſouls of others. Let

them not distrust the goodness of that God, in whom they "live, move, and have their being," now he has laid his hand upon them. Let them not wait for louder warnings than those which are, this day, sounding in their ears, and which are to be viewed as a fulfilment of God's holy word Their turn will also come, and prepared or not prepared, they must go when called. May the Lord give them all to realize their exposedness to death, and may he quicken them to have their lamps trimmed and burning. Being faithful to God in their respective stations, and persevering in faithfulness to the death, they will "receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

Let all this assembly be exhorted to improve the solemn scenes of this day. God is speaking to us all,—and his language is,—*Be ye also ready*. Let us all seriously reflect on our condition as candidates for eternity. Our sands are swiftly running—eternal scenes are at hand. In a few days, it will be said of us, as it now is of our deceased friends, whose remains we are about to follow to the grave, that we are dead. Let us turn the present moments to the best possible account, and no longer boast ourselves of to-morrow. God grant that in the great and awful day of Christ's appearing, we may be found of him in peace, and be admitted into that glorious kingdom, where all tears will be wiped away from our eyes.

Amen.